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CARDIN, MIKULSKI PRAISE SENATE PASSAGE OF FARM BILL PROVIDING IMPORTANT FUNDING TO PROTECT THE CHESAPEAKE BAY

Bill also Contains Funds for Nutrition & Food Programs

WASHINGTON – U.S. Senators **Benjamin L. Cardin** and **Barbara A. Mikulski** (both D-MD), today praised Senate passage of the farm bill, which for the first time will provide more than \$438 million in guaranteed funding for environmental programs that help protect the Chesapeake Bay. The Senate approved the measure by a vote of 81 to 15, and the House approved the same bill on Wednesday by a vote of 318 to 106, both veto-proof margins.

The Chesapeake Bay is America's largest estuary. The watershed covers 64,000 square miles. The Bay and its tidal rivers have more shoreline than the entire west coast of the United States. Senators Mikulski and Cardin had long urged their colleagues to pass this vital legislation that helps restore the health of the Chesapeake Bay area with major funding for cleanup and conservation.

"Agriculture is Maryland's largest industry and the Chesapeake Bay is our largest natural resource. It's essential that we provide local farmers a broad array of tools they need to protect the Chesapeake and maintain their viability," **said Senator Cardin**. "This is a farm bill that is good for American agriculture, good for American farmers, and good for all of us who go to the grocery store every week."

"When Senator Cardin and I first introduced the Chesapeake's Healthy and Environmentally Sound Stewardship of Energy and Agriculture Act (CHESSEA) of 2007, we pledged to do everything we could to restore the health of the Chesapeake Bay. Today's bill represents a major victory for the farmers and families who rely on the Bay. For the first time, the Bay is receiving a mandatory federal investment," **said Senator Mikulski**. "The Chesapeake Bay is not only Maryland's greatest natural resource, it's part of who we are as Marylanders – our heritage and our culture. Maryland communities want to do right by the Bay, but they can't do it on their own - we know the critical role the federal government must have in this process."

Maryland's 12,100 farms cover more than 2 million acres and produce \$1.3 billion of agricultural products annually. The farm bill provides support for Maryland's growing number of organic farmers and adds benefits to small farmers, including family farms across Maryland.

In addition to \$438 million over 10 years to restore the Chesapeake Bay, the legislation also provides record funding levels of more than \$10 billion for key nutritional programs including \$1.25 billion for food banks and increased funding for the school lunch and Women's Infant and Children (WIC) programs. Additionally, the bill contains a major increase in the Food Stamp Program, the nation's largest anti-hunger program. Currently, more than 317,000 Maryland families depend on food stamps, and the farm bill will fund \$5.4 billion over 10 years for the program, providing 131,000 Marylanders with additional benefits. The measure also will help families by allowing for full deduction of child care expenses in calculating income and benefit levels.

The farm bill also includes major reforms such as an income cap for farmers, a \$1.2 billion cut in the subsidy for turning corn into ethanol, and a \$1.7 billion cut to commodity program spending.

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